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U.S. Forces - Reduction in Western Europe

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P R E S S R E L E A S E

September 2, 1966

STATEMENT OF SENATOR MIKE MANSFIELD (D., MONTANA)

(Senator Mansfield who is out of town telephoned this statement to his office and directed its immediate release.)

In his speech at Phnom Penh, President Charles de Gaulle has set forth the conditions on which he believes the slim hope of a peaceful settlement in Viet Nam might be realized. He has called for what is tantamount to a reassertion of the essentials of the Geneva Agreement of 1954. This would include self-determination for the people of Indochina, a guaranteed neutralization, participation by all actual belligerents in any negotiations, and, in addition, at least "the five world powers." Finally, he has noted that the initiation of negotiations would depend on a U.S. commitment to withdraw its forces on the basis of a suitable "time-limit." As I understand it, from initial news reports, today, Prince Sihanouk and President de Gaulle subsequently underscored this point in a joint declaration by calling for the withdrawal of all foreign forces.

The conditions of a negotiated settlement which President de Gaulle has set forth do not seem to me to present any insurmountable obstacles, in terms of United States intentions in Viet Nam. The United States favors self-determination for the Vietnamese people; the President has said so. The United States is not adverse to neutralization of all of Indochina. The United States has made clear that it has no desire to keep its military forces in Viet Nam indefinitely.

The problem is not agreement on the principles of a settlement for Viet Nam; what is necessary is to come to grips with the actualities which may be involved in the principles. That depends on face-to-face discussion. To that end, I reiterate: a meeting between President de Gaulle and President Johnson, which both men have indicated in the past that they desire to hold, should be arranged at a mutually convenient time and place.

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